

THE TRANSPORT WORKER

DEC 2025

The journal of the RMTU
– NZ's largest specialist
transport union



Cover Image

Departing Northland Branch
Secretary Mat Bennie

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2025, a big year for RMTU, 2026 will be bigger!

As I look back on 2025, we have achieved a lot. We have participated locally, regionally, nationally and on the international stage.

This year our representatives have attended the ASLEF Conference in Durham, the ITF Conference in Prague, the International Docker Workers Council on anti-automation in Lisbon, the RTBU Council in Sydney and the ICLS Steering Committee meeting in Manila.

We attended the NZ Council of Trade Unions Conference in October, and we have a solid team attending the Labour Conference late November in Auckland.

NZ Council of Trade Unions (CTU)

At CTU biennial conference in 2023, a new work programme titled "Reimagining Aotearoa Together" (RIAT) was launched. RIAT recognising that tweaks to the current employment legislation is not enough if we want serious progressive change. The CTU consulted nationally, RIAT was endorsed by all of the affiliated unions.

The CTU also organised National Days of Action which were well attended and successful.

We have had protests over maintaining our Treaty, the abandoning of Pay equity claims and the largest

strike of Health workers and Teachers since the late 1970's!

At the 2025 CTU Conference RIAT was reinforced and additional documents presented –

- Māori Employment Action Plan
- A New Deal for workers
- Proposals for a Workplace Education Agency for Aotearoa
- A proposal for the return of Publicly Owned Electricity

So while CTU affiliates condemn the approach the current Government is taking, affiliates were upbeat. We know that if we work hard, we can make this Government a historical one term Government.

Election 2026

We have an estimated 1m kiwis living out of NZ, with most of them living in Australia. We know when voter participation levels are high, then better election outcomes are achieved. If a few hundred thousand extra votes come from these overseas Kiwis, it would make a difference. Voting from overseas is an easy process, they can download the voting form and upload electronically. The current Government are looking at making it harder to enrol and vote closer to election day so it will be essential that we are prepared, enrolled and vote early.

At our September **National Management Committee**

meeting the following positions were adopted—

- Condemnation of the genocide being carried out in Gaza and implementation of an immediate and permanent ceasefire.
- Those responsible for the killings, including those carried out in the Hamas attack on 7 October 2023, to be investigated and held to account in the international Criminal Court.
- Sanctions on the state of Israel.
- Calling on the NZ govt to adopt the same position. (A govt sanction would include cutting diplomatic ties and therefore expulsion of the Israeli ambassador to NZ)

These positions were sent through by one of our South Island Branches.

Member Database

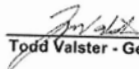

We are exploring options to improve or replace our membership database in 2026. Some of the aims are to make communications with and from the RMTU simpler. Also to automate reconciliation of members fees rather than the time-consuming manual process we now have.

Income Protection—Protect

We have a real opportunity to improve support for our injured or unwell members. Protect was set up by the Electrical Trade Union in Australia, 25 years ago.

Protect does have many options including severance compensation, Income Protection and free counselling. Clearly members are facing difficult times when they would need to use Income Protection and Counselling. We are looking at just Income Protection and counselling at this stage. There are various arrangements that we are exploring ranging from a percentage base contribution or a flat rate per week for Protect.

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) joined Protect 10 years ago

Rail and Maritime Transport Union Inc. Statement of Financial Position As of 30 June 2025			
Current Assets	Note	2025	2024
Cash and short-term deposits	5	1,132,634	1,024,609
Debtors and prepayments	4	121,839	160,415
Income Tax Receivable	3	17,036	1,745
Investments	7	4,850,389	4,669,285
Total Current Assets		6,121,897	5,856,055
Non Current Assets			
Property, plant & equipment	6	102,542	141,231
Investments	7	1,293,752	918,093
Total Non Current Assets		1,396,294	1,059,324
Total Assets		7,518,193	6,915,379
Current Liabilities			
Creditors and accrued expenses	8	156,651	165,294
Employee costs payable		122,085	94,614
Total Current Liabilities		278,736	259,908
Total Liabilities		278,736	259,908
Net Assets		7,239,457	6,655,471
Represented by:			
Accumulated surpluses & deficits		6,104,777	5,608,248
Strike fund reserve		841,259	782,955
Solidarity fund reserve		293,420	264,268
Members' Funds	9	7,239,457	6,655,471
Signed on behalf of the National Management Committee			
 Todd Valster - General Secretary		30/9/2025 Date	
 Aubrey Wilkinson - National President		30/9/2025 Date	

Statement of Financial Position for the RMTU at 30 June 2025

and more recently one of the MUNZ Locals and the NZ Professional Firefighters union.

As Kristy Cane, from Protect, MUA and CFMEU, explained, we would benefit for all the battling the MUA did to get Protect and now try to take it off the MUA members covered! The battle, of course, is to get employers to pay for the Protect subscription through our collective bargaining.

Put simply—members covered can receive up to 80% of their incomes for 2 years whether the issue is injury or health. The aim of Protect is to get

injured or unhealthy workers back to work.

On behalf of the NMC, I wish you a safe and relaxing Christmas 2025 and New Year 2026. For those that are working, a huge thanks for giving up the festive season to keep our rail and ports going.

Stay Safe,

Todd Valster
General Secretary 



Samuel Valentine Williams

More commonly known as **Bill or Bung**. A life member of the RMT Union.

Sadly, Bill passed away Monday 3rd November, having just had his 85th birthday.

A union stalwart of the old school, bred out of the Watersiders Union. Bill worked at Napier Port for well over 40 years, retiring in circa 2013. He was Branch Secretary for eons.

He played a pivotal role during Ports reform whereby the old

Harbour Boards were disestablished and the current Port companies were set up. Bill was on the Unions National body through this process 1988 to 90 which was then followed by the Employment Contracts Act. He was always at the forefront of these battles, leading the way for our members.

A man that did not mince his words, neither to management or the members but by the same token, caring and concerned for the well-being of all—family, friends and members.

An outstanding social conscience, a true labourite.

Thanks Bill, for all the support for Unions and workers, you will be missed, you will always be remembered for your Union ethics and contribution for ever improving the rights and working conditions both nationally and locally on the waterfront.

Haere ki te pai o te Atua e hoa.

Dave Marden. 

Workers Before Robots— Report from the Lisbon Summit

I was proud to fly the RMTU flag at the Lisbon Summit: “People Over Profit”, an international gathering of dockers, seafarers, and union leaders committed to protecting workers from job-killing automation.

The message from Lisbon was loud and clear: automation must not come at the expense of people or communities.

For generations, more cargo on the wharf meant more work for our members. But companies like DP World are now chasing profit through automation—fewer workers, more

machines. They call it progress. We call it corporate greed.

Speakers from around the world called for global solidarity and a united plan. We can’t allow employers to quietly rewrite the rules in code while deleting workers from the picture.

We say:

- No automation without agreement.
- No technology without training.
- No progress without people.

Technology should make our work safer—not erase our jobs or our towns. Every port job lost is another

blow to local families, local shops, and our collective strength.

If we stand together—in the courts, on the docks, and at the bargaining table—we can hold the line.

RMTU will continue to work alongside our international union family to make sure workers are in the driver’s seat of any change.

The future of the ports must be built by workers, not written by robots. 🌐

■ By Ratahi Ellis RMTU North Island Ports Rep



Rail Tram Bus Union— Australia hosts RMTU Delegates for their National Conference in Sydney

In September, an RMTU delegation headed over to Sydney to take part in the Australian Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) National Conference. They were joined by other international unions, including the UK's ASLEF, the UK Rail & Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) and the Japanese Railway Workers Union (JRU).

The two-day event, themed “Keep it Public, Safe and Moving,” brought together transport workers from across the rail, tram, and bus sectors to talk about the big issues facing our industries. There was plenty of discussion about privatisation, safety concerns, AI and surveillance technology, and ongoing battles against racism and discrimination.

Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Amanda Rishworth, spoke about some major wins for Aussie workers. These included reducing the gender pay gap from 14.1% to 11%, average annual wage increases of 4.2%, 10 days of paid domestic violence leave, superannuation added to parental leave, and stronger protections for union delegates.

“It’s a Bloody Mess” Campaign

RTBU Vice President Leanne Holmes didn’t mince words when she spoke about the union’s campaign called “It’s a Bloody Mess.” The campaign shines a light on the shocking state of

toilets and amenities on trains and at stations—many are in poor and unhygienic condition.

The RTBU is pushing for guaranteed access to clean, safe, and properly equipped toilet facilities for all workers.

Sleep Apnoea and the STOP-BANG Test

Sleep apnoea was another hot topic. The new STOP-BANG test—used to screen for obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA)—has caused real concern among members.

The test looks at eight factors: Snoring, Tiredness, Observed apnoeas, high blood Pressure, Body Mass Index (over 35), Age (over 50), Neck size (over 40 cm), and Gender (male). If you tick three or more boxes, you’re considered at high risk and sent for further medical evaluation.

The problem? Workers going through testing and treatment are being forced to use their own sick or annual leave, and many are losing pay or footing the bill for medical equipment. The union passed a motion to campaign so members aren’t financially disadvantaged when dealing with sleep apnoea testing or treatment.

Technology and AI: Preparing for the Future

Dr Daniel Nicholson from the University of Western Australia

presented his research on how unions can respond to rapid technological change and AI.

His study, “How Unions Respond to Technical Change,” looks at how new digital tools are transforming work—and how unions can make sure workers aren’t left behind.

The research will roll out in three stages:

1. **Desktop review**—analysing tech changes across RTBU industries and how collective agreements address them.
2. **Union feedback**—gathering input from members and organisers through focus groups.
3. **Practical outcomes**—producing a handbook for delegates and organisers to help bargain for fair outcomes when technology changes jobs.

Health and Safety

RTBU’s Assistant National Secretary (Loco Division) Keith McMahon gave an update on recent wins around health and safety laws. In Australia, unions can now prosecute under HSWA legislation, and industrial manslaughter laws have been introduced.

Ongoing issues for their members mirrored the same problems we have in New Zealand including fatigue from shift work, heat stress and the rising violence and abuse faced by bus and tram workers. The conference backed a motion for a national safety checklist that would



RTMU Delegation to RTBU conference: Leighton Mosese Karen Fletcher Todd Valster and Sam Kabui

set enforceable minimum standards for all operators—a big step forward for worker safety.

◀ The Victorian Branch spoke about the issue of diesel fume exposure at Southern Cross Station, where the mix of private operators and multiple PCBUs has resulted in a lack of accountability.

Workers' Comp and Industrial Issues

There was strong concern about the New South Wales Government's plan to toughen access to workers' compensation for psychiatric injuries, lifting the impairment threshold to 31%. To put that into context the

current threshold is 15% so if the law change goes through it will be much more difficult for workers to gain cover for mental harm injuries.

Meanwhile, in Victoria, delegates reported that driverless trains are being rolled out. The RTBU fought hard to ensure no forced redundancies as part of this change—and it took industrial action to secure that commitment.

Standing with First Nations People

The RTBU also passed a strong motion condemning recent racist attacks by neo-Nazis on Aboriginal people at the Shrine of Remembrance

and Camp Sovereignty near the Yarra. The union reaffirmed its support for the First People's Assembly of Victoria and the state's treaty process, recognising the ongoing struggle for justice and equality.

Climate Change and Future Events

Climate risks are becoming a bigger issue for all transport workers, so the conference endorsed a National Climate Risk Assessment to plan for the impacts ahead.

And for the Tram enthusiasts, it has been announced Victoria will host the World's Tram Driving Competition in 2027! 🚊

EF-Class Honoured with IMechE Heritage Award

The award was presented by the UK-based President of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) in recognition of the EF Class locomotives.

The IMechE

The IMechE is a global professional body founded in 1847 to advance the art and science of mechanical engineering. With over 115,000 members across 140 countries, it plays a pivotal role in promoting engineering excellence, supporting lifelong learning, and fostering innovation for sustainable development. Its mission is to improve the world through engineering by enhancing professional standards, engaging with society and governments, and nurturing future talent. Headquartered in London, IMechE serves as a central hub for collaboration, accreditation, and advocacy within the engineering community.

Heritage Awards

The Engineering Heritage Awards were established in 1984 to celebrate excellence in mechanical engineering and to raise public awareness of the profession's historical and ongoing contributions. Operated by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers' Heritage Committee, the awards aim to inspire and educate by highlighting significant engineering achievements—past and present—across a wide range of sectors. Through recognising artefacts, sites, and innovations that demonstrate uniqueness, industrial impact, or historical significance, the awards promote the enduring value of engineering in society and encourage appreciation of its legacy and future potential.

EF Loco recognition

The EF class locomotive is being recognised for a heritage award due to its distinctive engineering significance

and enduring contribution to New Zealand's rail infrastructure. Designed in the 1980s to meet a uniquely New Zealand requirement for a heavy-duty electric locomotive powered by renewable energy, the EF class represents a fusion of local need and UK engineering expertise. Its robust design has allowed it to remain in continuous service for decades, with ongoing upgrades and maintenance preserving its operational integrity.

Notably, the EF class influenced the development of locomotives used in the Channel Tunnel (Chunnel) in the UK, underscoring its international engineering relevance. The award application highlights its status as a pioneering example of sustainable motive power, its industrial innovation, and its historical importance within New Zealand's rail network.



Hui a tau

The hui a tau was organised by Te Kupenga Mahi and held at Orongomai Marae in Upper Hutt, Te Whanganui-a-Tara/Wellington on 3–5 October. Participants included representatives from KiwiRail, Transdev Wellington with guest speakers from the Police and Greater Wellington Regional Council.

The whaikorero was delivered by Huata Manuel and Tini Winiata.

Tangata Whenua delivered an informative history of Orongomai Marae. This was followed with whakawhānau (introductions and building relationships).

Some participants stayed for Workshops on Saturday and others were privileged to a tour of the archive Te Papa museum. The Annual General Meeting was held on the final day.

RMTU President Aubrey Wilkinson said the attendees were heartened by

the great feeling of the hui particularly noting the young people coming through and picking up important roles for the future. The next hui a tau is likely to be held in April/May 2026.





Kiwi Rail EF Class Locomotives



Hui attendees at Orongomai Marae in Upper Hutt

Remutaka Dust Issue

Worksafe Issues KiwiRail with Two Improvement Notices

Worksafe NZ has issued KiwiRail two Improvement Notices after finding breaches of the Health and Safety at Work Act and Health and Safety Regulations relating to worker exposure to respirable crystalline silica (RCS)—a hazardous dust linked to serious lung diseases.

How It Started

In June, KiwiRail track workers contacted the RMTU after learning that trace amounts of respirable crystalline silica had been detected in dust build-up onboard the Wairarapa passenger trains. These same workers had carried out rerailing work in the Remutaka Tunnel earlier in the year.

They sent the union videos and photos showing thick dust inside the tunnel, along with anonymous witness statements describing the inadequate respiratory protection. Many said they were given only one filter for an entire shift, despite the heavy dust levels. Some workers even wore P2 masks under their VersaFlow respirators, yet still reported breathing in dust.

Another serious concern was the “productivity payment” system, which offered workers up to \$7,200 for completing the job on time. Workers said a “productivity payment” may have incentivized workers to tolerate unsafe conditions. The RMTU criticized this system before it was introduced, warning KiwiRail that it mirrors the flawed safety culture that contributed to disasters like Pike River. The union told KiwiRail that linking pay to productivity discourages reporting of hazards and pushes workers to prioritize ‘getting the job done’ over health and safety.

The Investigation

The RMTU referred the workers’ anonymised statements and videos to Worksafe NZ, which launched an investigation and met with both workers and management. On 26 September, Worksafe issued KiwiRail two Improvement Notices.

The **first notice** found that KiwiRail had not ensured that respiratory protection was suitable for workers, with no face-fit testing or proper training on respirator use.

The **second notice** stated that KiwiRail **had not effectively managed the risk of silica dust exposure**, failing to carry out exposure monitoring or give the risk proper weighting in its risk assessments.

Worksafe has now required KiwiRail to:

- Develop a process to ensure all workers exposed to ballast dust receive proper training and information on the correct use of respiratory protection.
- Implement a comprehensive risk management process for dealing with respirable crystalline silica and other hazardous substances including making sure the correct controls are in place and are effective

What Is Respirable Crystalline Silica (RCS)?

RCS is created when materials like rock, concrete, or sand are cut, drilled, or disturbed. The dust particles are so fine they’re often invisible, yet can lodge deep in the lungs. Long-term exposure can cause silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and lung cancer. These diseases can take years to appear—and can continue to progress even

after exposure ends. The source of the RCS is from rail ballast.

What’s Next?

An **independent review** by engineering firm BECA is underway to identify “what went wrong”. The terms of reference—developed jointly with the RMTU—include a detailed review of:

- How the Remutaka Tunnel rerailing work was planned and managed in terms of risk management
- The effectiveness of KiwiRail’s risk management processes around silica exposure.

The review includes feedback and interviews with:

- KiwiRail and contractor staff.
- Workers directly involved in ballast removal and installation.
- Planning and management personnel.

A draft report will be provided to both KiwiRail and the RMTU for review.

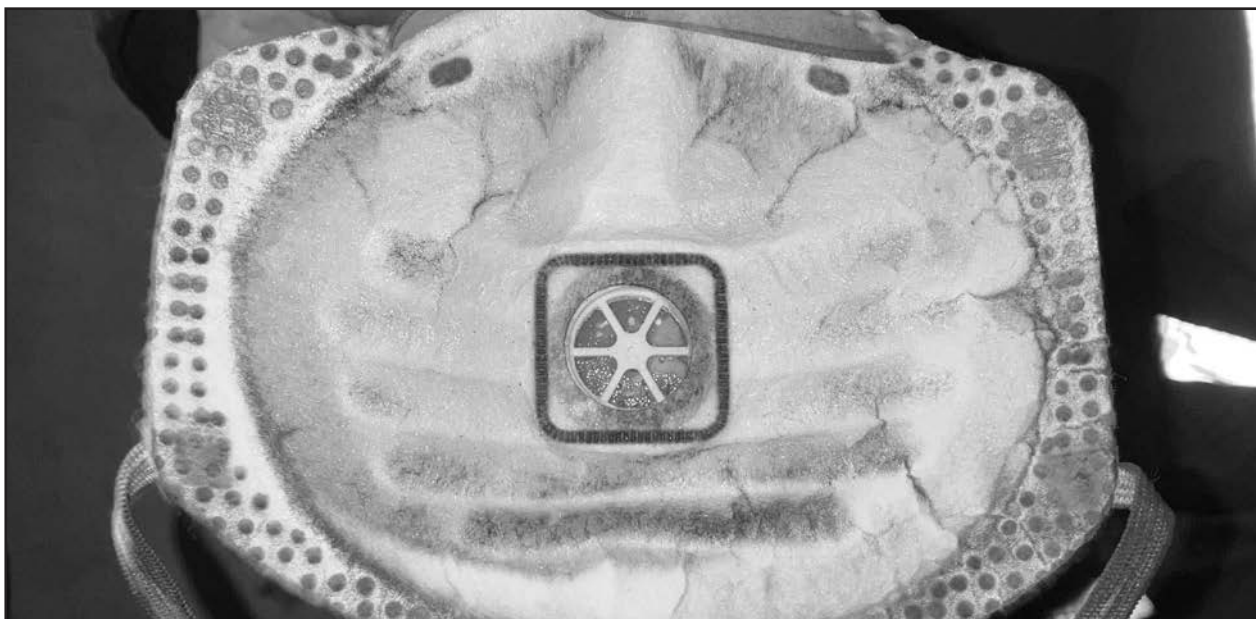
Ballast Dust Risks

Previous monitoring by **Air Matters** in 2018 and 2022 found **highly elevated particulate levels** during ballast cleaning—**above the workplace exposure standard**—and noted that PPE was unsuitable.

The reports warned that workers were at **high risk of exposure** to inhalable and respirable dust, silica, and noise, and recommended that:

1. Workers and contractors be informed of the risks.
2. Fit-tested, comfortable respiratory protection (such as powered air respirators) be used.
3. Proper training in respirator use be provided.
4. Health monitoring be carried out.





Inside of a worker's mask, covered in dust, showing basic PPE is not enough for the conditions

5. Dust suppression controls (e.g., water systems) be introduced.

Track machine operators have since told the union that ballast dust remains a major problem. They do not routinely wear respiratory protection and apart from ballast cleaning workers have not received personal monitoring to assess their exposure.

The RMTU urges track workers who are exposed to ballast dust to contact the union.

Health Monitoring

Following advice from KiwiRail's Chief Medical Officer, health monitoring for track workers has been brought forward.

The RMTU urges all workers to keep copies of their health monitoring results and share them with their GP. Lung conditions caused by silica can develop years later, so maintaining permanent records is vital for ACC cover and treatment.

Employers are only required to keep health records for ten years, so keeping your own copy is essential.

Asbestos Probe Urged

The RMTU has signed an open letter from Unions to the Prime Minister requesting an urgent review into regulatory system failures resulting in asbestos-containing products in workplaces, ECEs and schools

The letter

On behalf of NZ Rail and Maritime Transport Union listed below, we are requesting an urgent, system-wide investigation and review into the significant asbestos regulatory system failures.

These failures have allowed fibre boards¹ and coloured sand products²

containing asbestos to be imported into New Zealand and subsequently used in workplaces, schools, early childhood centres (ECEs), community settings, and private homes.³

Within the space of 4 months there have been two unrelated products, both containing asbestos, that have entered workplaces and education

1 <https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/about-us/news-and-media/statement-on-frbasbestos/>

2 <https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/about-us/news-and-media/asbestos-in-coloured-sand/>

3 Other recent examples of these failures occurring include asbestos being found in new locomotive freight trains and Great Wall utes:

settings, unnecessarily and dangerously exposing workers and children to the most well-known occupational health hazard and killer. Asbestos exposure kills approximately 220 people per year.⁴

This represents a profound breach of trust and duty, not just by the individual actors responsible for the manufacturing, importation and distribution of the asbestos containing products, but also in the regulatory systems designed to protect workers and children.

These two examples demonstrate:

1. The current regulatory settings are not fit for purpose, and/or
2. There has been serious and sustained breakdown across border controls, product assurance, market surveillance, and regulatory oversight.

This has exposed workers and children to a known carcinogen that is strictly prohibited under New Zealand law.

Entry and distribution of asbestos-containing products into the New Zealand market constitutes a clear and alarming failure against the importation ban and the statutory duties imposed by the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA). While the Regulators will be considering the legal obligations of the individual actors within this system, it is clear there is also a wider regulatory system design issue that must be addressed.

Urgent review required

Given the legal and public health implications, there should be a broad formal investigation into how the fibre boards and asbestos-containing sand entered New Zealand, including:

- Whether there have been failures in border testing and declarations.
- Whether there have been failures in oversight of import controls and supplier assurance.
- Whether the allocation of roles and responsibilities across cross-government departments and agencies enables and ensures that there are sufficient resourcing, attention, and oversight of the system and the controls in place.
- Whether there have been failures in the monitoring of high-risk products entering the market; and
- Irrespective of the above, whether the system itself has the right level of controls in place to ensure such products do not enter the market.

The review must consider the existing frameworks with a view to improving:

- Border testing procedures.
- Importer and supplier declaration systems.
- Market surveillance and proactive product testing.
- Oversight of high-risk consumer products that enter workplaces.
- Cross-agency collaboration and consistency.

- How asbestos exposure records will be kept;⁵ and

- Whether the assumption in the HSWA regulatory regime that there is no asbestos in the built environment after 2000 can remain.⁶


It is critical that all relevant stakeholders are included in this review, ensuring the voice of occupational health professionals, workers, business, and other impacted communities.

The review must also consider the current settings within the Accident Compensation scheme, including whether those exposed to asbestos will be able to access cover and entitlements should they suffer health consequences in the future arising from their exposure.

Expectations and Accountability

New Zealanders are entitled to full transparency, accountability, and corrective action. The scale of these failures has allowed banned carcinogenic materials to reach workers and children. This demands swift and decisive intervention at a Ministerial and system-wide level.

We therefore request confirmation that:

1. An urgent regulatory review will be initiated.
2. An investigation into system failures will be undertaken; and
3. Indicative timeframes for public reporting will be provided. 

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/asbestos-found-in-new-freight-trains/5BKKSEKFSARJF53IDUHOCGPQV4/>

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/nz-bypasses-recall-for-asbestos-use/OJJYXNVAYK6G6YGONREWTJGN74/>

⁴ <https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/about-us/news-and-media/more-must-be-done-to-manage-asbestos-risks/>

⁵ We note the exposure register has been closed. Exposure records are vitally important to access treatment and entitlements under the Accident Compensation scheme.

<https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/notifications/report-an-unsafe-or-unhealthy-work-situation/asbestos-exposure-registration/>

⁶ <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2016/0015/latest/DLM6729810.html>



Women in Male Dominated Industries 2026

RMTU Women's Council are continuing to fundraise to help support our wāhine getting to WIMDOI 2026. If you know of anyone that would like to sponsor or donate to this once in a lifetime event please contact Rebecca Hauck. Keep an eye out for fundraisers in your local areas.

Your WIMDOI committee hard at it again planning WIMDOI, in New Zealand in 2026! From top to bottom:

Rebecca Hauck

National Women's Representative

Rail Maritime Transport Union, RMTU

Michelle Ingley-Smith

Organiser

Timber, Furnishing and Textile Union South Australia District, TFTU

Annette McCauley

National Women's Representative

Maritime Union New Zealand, MUNZ

Lisa Zanatta

Organiser

Victoria Construction, Forestry, and Maritime Employees Union, CFMEU

Patricia Fernandez

Secretary/Treasurer

Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union New South Wales Branch AMIEU, and Founding Member of WIMDOI

Mich-Elle Myers

Assistant National Secretary

Maritime Union Australia, MUA

Leanne Holmes

National Director of Organising & Vice

President (Women)

Australian Rail, Tram and Bus Industry Union, RTBU

NZ's Aging Population:

The Case for a Capital Gains Tax?

In late October Labour announced its plan to campaign on a capital gains tax into the next election that will target commercial and residential properties (excluding the family home, farms and inheritance). They pledge the money will be ring fenced and used to improve access to health care by funding three free doctors visits per year for everyone.

This policy, some have argued does not go far enough, whilst others wholly disagree with the concept of a CGT.

Whether you agree with a CGT or not, like many countries NZ's birth-rate has been falling for decades due to less people having children whilst at the same time people are living longer due to improvements to health care and living standards. In the 1960's in NZ, people over 65 made up 8.5% of the population, whilst children (under 14) made up 34%. Today, the numbers are reversed, 65 year plus group is 16.5% of the population and children are 18.5% of the population.

By 2027 the number of people over aged 65 will overtake the number of children in NZ.

From a tax revenue perspective the change in demographics was

discussed in the IRD's draft report on tax options for an ageing and changing population¹. Less working aged people means less tax collection to support public services and superannuation income for the growing number of retirement aged people.

Migration can partially offset the effects of a low birth rate. In recent decades, more people have migrated to New Zealand than have left, and this has been a key driver of population and economic growth. Migrants tend to be relatively young and therefore slow the ageing of the population.

The IRD's draft report on tax options looks at options to increase revenue to support the future populations needs including a comprehensive capital gains tax.

The case for a Capital Gains Tax

Capital Gains tax is charged on the sale of an asset. The argument for this tax is usually that it would mean that all income should be treated and taxed in the same way. New Zealand's lack of a capital gains tax makes us unusual in the OECD world.

The NZ tax working group report² said a capital gains tax would broaden the tax base to help safeguard the Government's future revenue collection ability. In their report from 2019

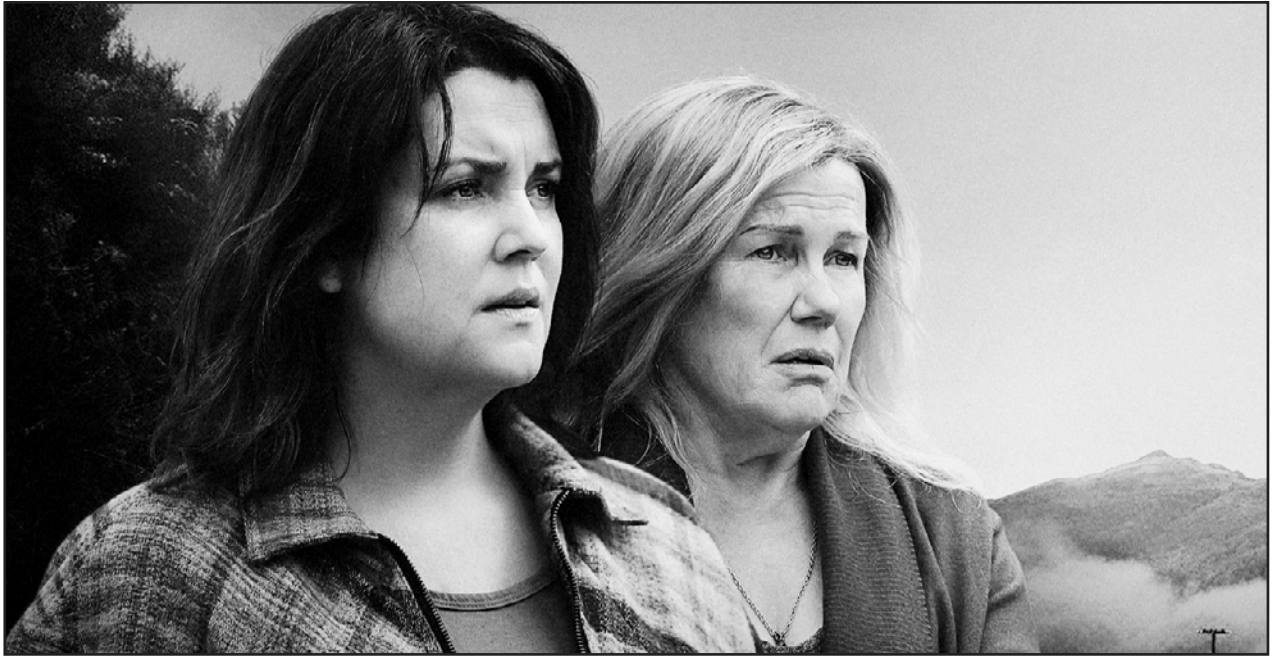
the NZ tax working group projected that a comprehensive capital gains tax (set at the marginal tax rate of the individual who is being taxed) would raise approximately 1.2% of GDP in tax revenue once it had been in place for 10 years.

The NZ Council of Trade Union Economic bulletin³ points out that in NZ there is extreme disparity in effective tax rates between ordinary Kiwis and the top 0.1%. Research published in 2023 found that the richest 311 families in New Zealand only pay an effective tax rate of 9.5%. That is, only 9.5%⁴ of their total income is spent on tax. This compares to an effective tax rate of 20.4% for the median-income household. So "middle New Zealand" pays twice as much tax, in proportional terms, than the very wealthiest New Zealanders. One of the main reasons for this huge difference is that the wealthiest households earn 80% of their income from capital gains.

A comprehensive CGT would help to address two problems at once. By closing a gap in the income tax base, it would provide government with additional revenue to meet the fiscal pressures of an ageing population. At the same time, it would help to rebalance the tax system so that the wealthy are paying their fair share.



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- 1 Consultation/Inland Revenue draft long term insights briefing. Stable bases and flexible rates: New Zealand's tax system Issued: June 2025
 - 2 Future of Tax Final Report Volume I (Feb 2029). Found at www.taxworkinggroup.govt.nz
 - 3 NZCTU: Te Kauae Kaimahi. Economic Bulletin (August 2025). Found at www.union.org.nz/economic-bulletin-august-2025
 - 4 High-wealth individuals research project. (April 2023) prepared by Policy and regulatory stewardship, Inland revenue



Review—Pike River (2025)

Director: Robert Sarkies
 Writer: Fiona Samuel
 Starring: Melanie
 Lynskey (Anna Osborne),
 Robyn Malcolm (Sonya
 Rockhouse), Lucy
 Lawless (Helen Kelly)

Pike River is a deeply moving drama based on the 2010 Pike River Mine disaster, which claimed the lives of 29 men in one of New Zealand's worst industrial tragedies. Rather than sensationalizing the explosions, the film focuses on the aftermath—the grief, resilience, and relentless fight for justice led by Anna Osborne and Sonya Rockhouse, two women who lost loved ones and became the faces of a 15-year battle for accountability. The facts of the disaster are indisputable and are best laid out in Rebecca Macfie's 2013 book "Tragedy at Pike River Mine."

The narrative begins in the chaos following the first explosion and spans years of advocacy, legal battles, and heartbreak. It avoids gratuitous

recreations of the disaster, instead immersing viewers in the confusion and despair of families waiting for answers. Themes include:

- **Justice vs. Power:** The film critiques systemic failures and corporate negligence.
- **Female Strength & Solidarity:** At its heart, it's about two ordinary women doing extraordinary things.
- **Grief & Hope:** Balances raw sorrow with moments of warmth and humour, highlighting human resilience.

Melanie Lynskey and Robyn Malcolm deliver career-defining performances. Lynskey portrays Anna with quiet strength and vulnerability, while Malcolm brings fiery determination to Sonya. Their chemistry is the emotional core of the film. Lucy Lawless shines as Helen Kelly, the trade union leader who supported the families.

Robert Sarkies (known for *Out of the Blue*) opts for restraint and authenticity. The film avoids dramatising the explosions, focusing instead on intimate, everyday details.

Cinematography captures the rugged West Coast and the claustrophobic tension of courtrooms and community hall

Why It Matters

Pike River is more than a film; it's a call to action. It asks viewers: Are we okay with this?—a company killing 29 workers in an avoidable catastrophe and escaping accountability. It's a story of courage, friendship, and the enduring fight for justice.

We are left pondering the question of corporate manslaughter and whether or not those responsible should ultimately be accountable.

We await the outcome of the police investigation into Pike River. The timing of this movie is no coincidence as the present government seeks to water down Health and Safety Law, it is more important than ever that we protect the safety of workers and that they can return home each day and not need to deal with greedy corporate bodies that prioritise production over the safety of their workers. 🌐



Red card refresher
training for LPC members



R MTU and invited unions held red card training, led by Karen Fletcher, to re-emphasise members' rights and responsibilities regarding unsafe work.

As experienced employees leave the workforce and new staff begin, it is appropriate to revisit the history and relevance of the red card.

The training covered why the card was introduced, examples of when it has and can be used, and the process to follow when it is used.

If you believe you or any person would be exposed to a serious risk to health or safety by carrying out certain work, you have the right to cease or refuse to carry out that unsafe work. (HSWA 2015 Section 83). Use the red card. Just say no.

A Slap in the Face for the New Zealand Worker

Employment Relations Amendment Bill

The Employment Relations Amendment Bill 2025 introduces several significant changes that could have far-reaching implications, many of which are seen as reducing employee protections and shifting the balance of power toward employers.

To summarise the changes proposed by the Government's Employment Relations Amendment Bill which:

1. Change the contractor vs employee test.

The present test of whether someone is an employee requires consideration of the reality of the arrangement. The proposed new test amends the definition of "employee" to exclude a "specified contractor". A specified contractor arrangement exists if:

- a written agreement with the worker specifies they are an independent contractor, and
- the business does not restrict the worker from working for another business (except while engaged), and
- the business does not require the worker to be available to work on specific times of day or days, or for a minimum number of hours, and
- the worker can sub-contract the work to another (who may need to be vetted by the business), and
- the arrangement does not terminate if the worker does not accept an additional task or engagement than they have agreed to perform under the arrangement, and

- the worker had a reasonable opportunity to seek independent advice before they agreed.

This change is intended to remove the Court's ability to inquire into the true nature of the worker's relationship with the business and to deny many workers the hard-won benefits of employee status. Reduced access to remedies for personal grievances.

2. Increase the impact of employee contribution in the personal grievance process by severely limiting the remedies available.

Even if an employee is able to establish unjustified dismissal there will be significant barriers to meaningful compensation.

Employees will be less successful challenging employer behaviour, and the compensation for members will be reduced significantly. The changes proposed:

- Remove all remedies for an employee whose behaviour amounts to serious misconduct. There will be far more at stake for employees who are found to have committed serious misconduct, and such a finding will mean there are no remedies available to them regardless of the employer's conduct.
- Entirely remove the entitlement to reinstatement and compensation for hurt and humiliation where an employee contributed to the situation which gives rise to the personal grievance situation. The conduct of employees throughout the entire process of being unjustifiably dismissed or

disadvantaged will be under significant scrutiny.

- Enable 100% reductions to other remedies (e.g. lost wages) where an employee contributed to the situation which gives rise to the personal grievance.
- Require the Authority and Court to consider whether the employee's behaviour obstructed the employer's ability to conduct an investigation fairly and reasonably. If an employee was obstructive during the investigation, then an employer may have a defence to what would otherwise be investigating unfairly and unreasonably. Specifically, where obstruction has occurred an employer will be able to defend itself from a finding that its investigation was unjust as set out in s103A(3)(a) – (d) of the Act.
- Reduce the ability for an employee to claim procedural error. Currently only minor procedural errors by an employer can be acceptable. The new test allows for any procedural defects by an employer, as long as the error did not result in the employee being treated unfairly.

3. Deny employees earning over \$180,000 (i) the ability to raise a personal grievance for or related to an unjustified dismissal, (ii) the right to information and consultation under s4(1A)(c), and (iii) access to section 120 requests for reasons for dismissal.





Southland Branch members, with other unions, rally against attacks on workers earlier in the year

At present any employee can raise a personal grievance for an unjustified dismissal (unless under a 90-day trial period). The changes proposed will remove the right to challenge a dismissal if the employee earns more than \$180,000. In addition to this, for employees earning over \$180,000, an employer is not required to undertake a process in accordance with section 4(1A) (c) of the Act and is not required to comply with a request for a statement explaining the reasons for the dismissal under section 120 of the Act.

There will be a 12-month transition period from the commencement of the legislation, unless an employee voluntarily changes their position. The employer and employee can also agree to contract out of this provision. Following that, anyone who has not negotiated otherwise can be dismissed without any legal recourse if they earn over \$180,000.

4. Remove the 30-day rule providing new starts the terms of a CA, making it easier for 90-day trials to be imposed, for example.

At present for the first 30 days of employment, employees working within coverage of a collective agreement receive its terms. They can then decide whether to join the union or not. The proposed changes remove this requirement and revert to the 2015-2019 position regarding provision of information.

This means employers only need to provide a new employee within coverage with a copy of the collective agreement, inform the employee the collective agreement exists and that they will not be covered by it unless they join the union, and how to contact the union.

If the employee agrees, the employer must inform the union that the employee has entered into an IEA.

The explanatory note to the Bill is clear that these changes are expected to increase the use of 90-day trials, which are generally prevented by the presence of a collective agreement on a site.

The Amendment Act will come into force the day after Royal Assent. We don't have any indication how quickly the Bill will advance through Parliament.

We are still considering these changes and note that it is currently a Bill, so it may change. These changes are not law yet. We note the response from the unions when 90-day trials were initially introduced was focus litigation to reduce their impact as much as possible. 🌐

Port Reform: The Legacy of Port Reform

This article is written by Victor Billot. It is part two of a series of articles about the history of NZ's ports. Part one is about the seismic legislative changes in the 1980's, known as "Ports Reform", and was published in the September issue of *Transport Worker*. Part 2 follows the story of what happened next:

Port reform had an enduring and painful effect on the New Zealand waterfront.

The previous major shift in ports had been technology-led, when containerization came in and displaced labour. The "container revolution" in New Zealand began on 19 June 1971, when the first all-container ship, the *Columbus New Zealand*, berthed at the new Thorndon Container Terminal in Wellington. Container terminals were established at other ports throughout the 1970s. This shift, while disruptive, was gradual and driven by logistics.

In the late 1980s, port reform was another massive shift, this time driven entirely by ideology. It was a key front in the assault on New Zealand's regulated and mixed economy by the neoliberal ideologues in control of the Fourth Labour Government and the subsequent National Government.

For over a century, since the Harbours Act of 1878, New Zealand's ports were not commercial enterprises. They were a network of autonomous, publicly owned, and locally accountable Harbour Boards. These boards operated with a broad

civic mandate, responsible for everything from dredging and land reclamation to pilotage and safety. Profits were channelled back into facilities and ports were treated as community assets.

Ross Wilson, who became National Secretary of the New Zealand Harbour Workers Union (HWU) in 1986, recalled that the port reform attack was expected. The reforms were spearheaded by ministers like Richard Prebble, who were determined to apply a free-market blueprint to the entire public sector.

The primary weapon was the Port Companies Act 1988. This Act forcibly transferred commercial operations from the public Harbour Boards to newly created port companies. This replaced over a century of public service ethos with a new goal: "The principal objective of every port company is to operate as a successful business."

This was immediately followed by the Waterfront Industry Commission Reform Act 1989. It abolished the Waterfront Industry Commission (WIC) and the national bureau system of labour allocation for waterfront workers. The entire national structure for bargaining and employment was shattered, throwing waterfront workers into direct employment relationships.

A Calculated Assault

Port reform was only part of the picture. New Zealand Rail had been corporatized by the Fourth Labour Government and in 1993 was privatized and sold to overseas owners, leading to a fifteen-year failed experiment before rail was brought back

into public ownership in 2008. New Zealand coastal shipping was decimated with the introduction of the 'open coast' policy in 1994, which effectively allowed foreign shipping to carry cargo domestically.

But the port reforms were the beachhead. The consequences for the workforce were immediate and devastating.

Former HWU official Eddie Dickson recalled that "50%—it might've been a little bit more—of employees with the port companies lost their jobs."

Peter Clemens, an electrician who had been with the Timaru Harbour Board since 1984 and a local HWU branch president, described the workforce as being decimated. He says in the mid-1980s, the Timaru Harbour Board employed over 100 people directly, with more than 300 waterside workers. The port was a massive employer, particularly for the meat loaders who spent weeks loading frozen carcasses.

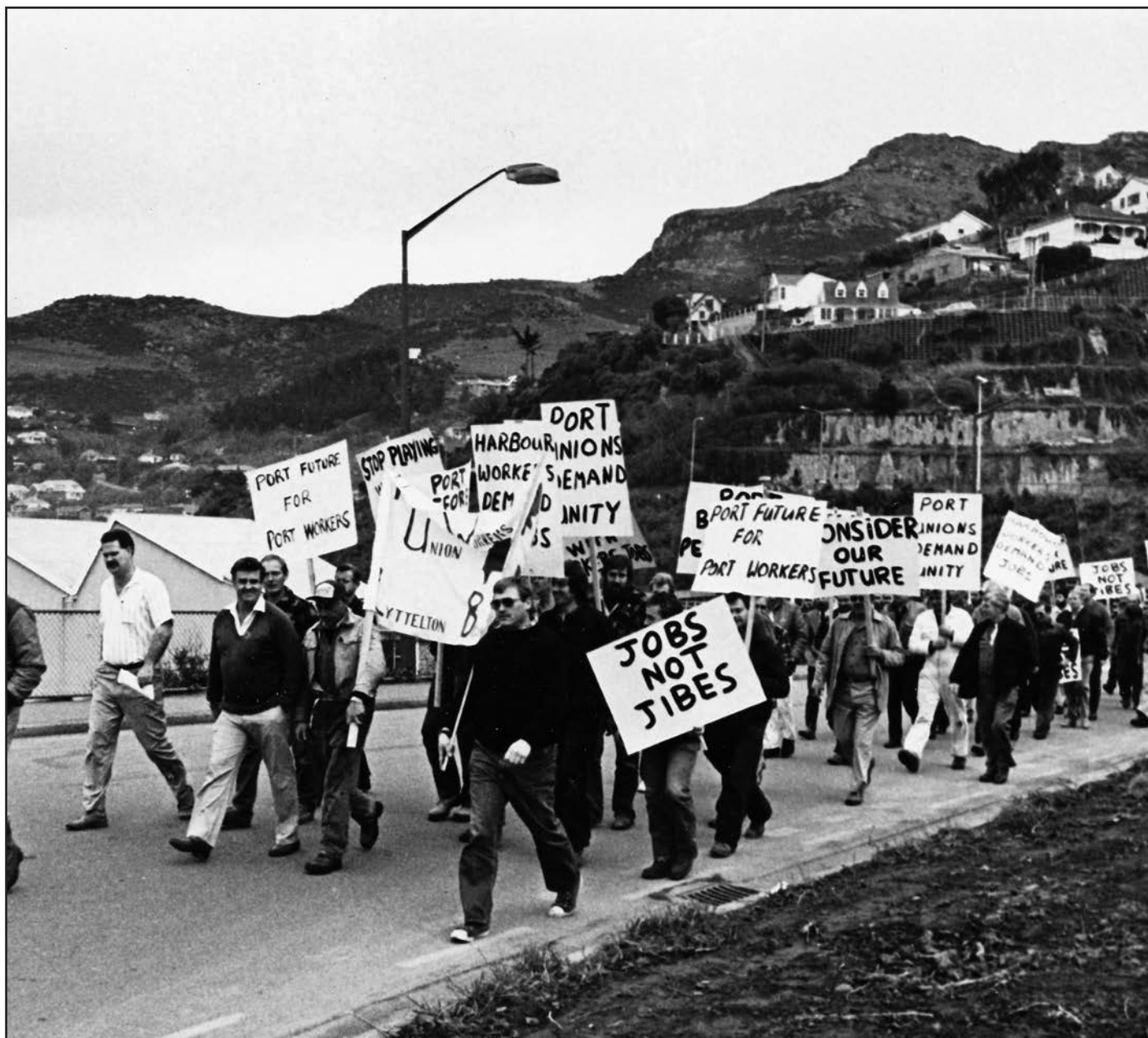
Clemens says this workforce was hit by a double-blow: containerization, which "absolutely killed that frozen meat industry," and "Rogernomics".

"It was just one round of redundancies after the next. As a delegate, half of our time was spent in negotiations about redundancy rounds."

The Harbour Workers Union, led by Ross Wilson, mounted a defence. The union leadership made the decision, to pre-emptively negotiate a strong redundancy agreement before the axe fell.

"The belief at that time was that if you negotiate redundancy conditions, you're just inviting the employers to





Harbour Workers Union opposing Ports Reform, 1988. Coming up from Pacifica No 7 Wharf

◀ take advantage of it,” Wilson says. “But we knew what was coming. We wanted to make sure that there was an orderly process.”

As detailed in *Stronger Together: A history of the RMTU* by Peter Franks, the union “decided to try to negotiate and influence change rather than simply trying to hold the line.”

To force the issue, the union launched a strategic port strike in Nelson on an issue of an enhanced redundancy agreement. The 22-day strike was successful, resulting in a

‘gold plated’ national redundancy agreement, one of the best in New Zealand, which wouldn’t make it cheap for the employers to dismiss workers.

However, Peter Clemens pointed out the downside of this necessary strategy. “The danger was when voluntary redundancies came up, it was always your best workers and the best-skilled workers that applied for redundancy because they could go and get jobs tomorrow. It just decimated the workforce.”

The ECA and the ‘Race to the Bottom’

The final and most damaging attack was the introduction of the Employment Contracts Act (ECA) in 1991. This was a devastating and anti-union piece of legislation that dismantled New Zealand’s 100-year-old industrial relations system.

The ECA effectively wrote unions out of the law. They lost their special status and were relegated to being just one of many possible ‘bargaining



Constable Tim Ashton (later member of RMTU), Warren Collins Watersiders secretary, Paul Corliss Harbour Workers Secretary, Bill Menzies President Harbour Workers Union anti ECAct march, 1991

agents' with no automatic right to represent workers.

The abolition of compulsory unionism led to a rapid decline in union membership and density across the country. Unions lost their right to access workplaces and, crucially, employers were no longer obligated to bargain with them.

The ECA abolished the national award system, which had set minimum pay and conditions for entire industries. The system was replaced

by a focus on individual employment contracts. This forced many workers to negotiate one-on-one with their employer, a relationship that was inherently unequal.

The Harbour Workers Union had again moved pre-emptively. Just prior to the ECA, under the 1987 Labour Relations Act, the union had consolidated all its local 'second tier' bargaining deals into one massive national award. Paul Corliss, then a HWU official, says this 595-page

collective agreement, registered with the Arbitration Court, preserved the majority of conditions that would otherwise have been lost.

But the ECA was designed to destroy exactly this kind of collective protection.

"It just became a race to the bottom," Wilson said. "You did have competition between ports, and that puts pressure on wage positions."

A vivid example of the ECA's implications occurred at Port Nelson. As



noted in *Stronger Together*, the new management was aggressively pushing workers onto individual contracts, offering financial inducements to break the collective.

In 1992, two union members, Peter Macadam and Michael Renwick, were dismissed for allegedly writing a satirical poem lampooning the workers who had signed individual contracts. The "Nelson port poets" affair became a landmark case.

The union, arguing it was part of the long tradition of waterfront satire, took the case to the Employment Tribunal and won, successfully reinstating both workers in a major

victory against the new industrial regime.

Survival by Consolidation

The cumulative impact of these reforms created a new and hostile environment for unions. With membership bases decimated and stable state employer relationships replaced by adversarial dealings with corporate managers, "survival demanded consolidation."

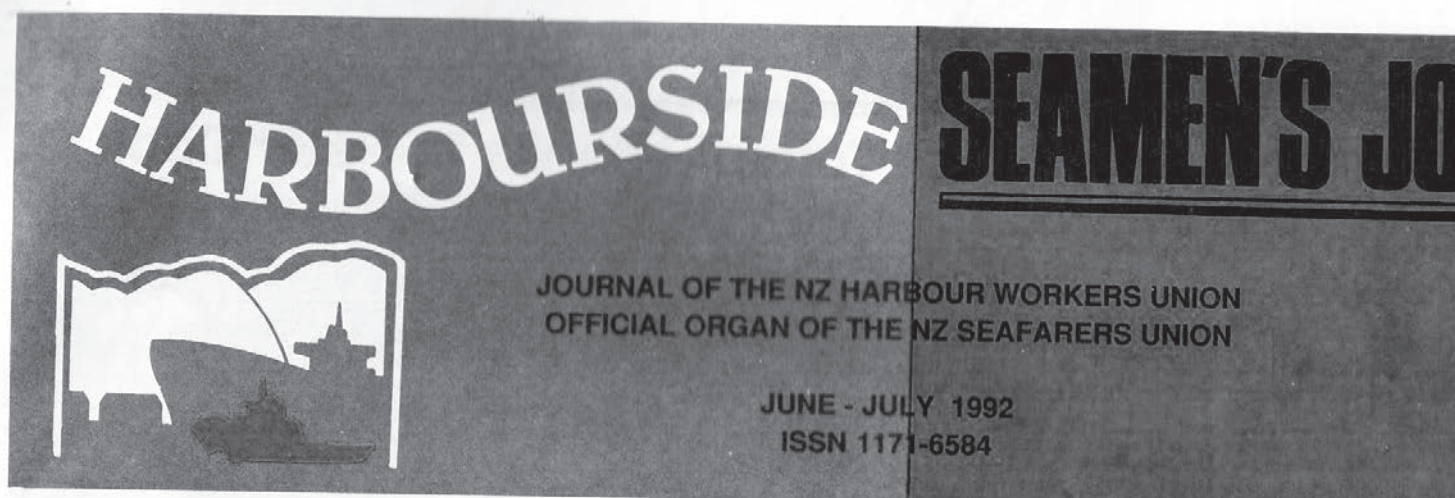
Paul Corliss expressed a long-held belief in the necessity of a broader transport union. "Regardless, whether you're on the wharf on the rail on the trucks...transport was

gonna get f—g dealt to without our involvement."

This move began in the rail sector, which was facing its own identical ideological assault. In 1990, several specialist railway craft unions had merged to form the Combined Union of Railway Employees (CURE). Then, in 1995, the New Zealand Harbour Workers Union merged with CURE and the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) to create the Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU).

Eddie Dickson notes that this amalgamation came after the completion of the port industry restructuring. It was a pragmatic, defensive reaction

Harbour Workers Union - Headline Nelson Port Poets dismissal 1992 includes Branch President



Sacked Workers Casualties of "Stubborn Vindictiveness"

"THIS CASE is a product of the Employment Contracts Act, and the strategy of an employer which turned one of the most motivated, flexible and productive waterfront workforces in any port in New Zealand, into two factions - those who had succumbed to the pressure to sign individual contracts and those who wanted to retain the collective contract."

Harbour Workers Union National Secretary Ross Wilson made this point in his opening submissions to the Employment Tribunal in the Union's case against the Port of Nelson over the sacking of Peter Macadam and Michael Renwick.

He said the case had "all the hallmarks of scapegoating. Mr. Green, for instance, had



**MESS
MUSIC**

The pen, they
any sword
The tie that b
cord.
I fail to under
really at a
That a little p
the boss.
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they're son
How come a b
the savage

The boss is ri
completely
What hope is
likes of you
When a sing



Combined Port Unions, Employment Contracts Bill March & Protest, Lyttelton Container Terminal tower, 1990

to a common existential threat. The reforms had created a unified industrial battlefield, and “the old distinctions between a locomotive engineer and a track worker, or between a railwayman and a port employee, became secondary.” Amalgamation was a strategy for survival, a pooling of resources to maintain a collective voice.

A Divided Waterfront

Despite the RMTU’s amalgamation, the broader vision of a single, unified transport union remained elusive. A divide persisted on the waterfront between the RMTU (representing the former harbour workers) and the Waterfront Workers Union (the ‘wharfies,’ who amalgamated into the Maritime Union of New Zealand—MUNZ—in 2001).

Ross Wilson says that a merger between the harbour workers and the wharfies “nearly got over the line,” but fell over short of a resolution. Eddie Dickson recalled “the combination of the waterfront workers and the harbour workers would’ve meant a more powerful and more disciplined battle against the bosses in those days but we didn’t have that.” Paul Corliss agreed, calling the lack of a single union on the waterfront a “huge disadvantage.”

This fragmented and aggressive new environment, defined by contracting-out and casualisation, led to a tragedy that shocked the nation.

On New Year’s Eve, 1999, Christine Clarke, a mother, wife, and community activist, was killed on a picket line at the Port of Lyttelton. The dispute was a result of the new

contractual model. Workers were protesting the Lyttelton Port Company’s decision to contract out its coal operation to cheaper and unorganised labour.

The picket, a joint action by RMTU and Waterfront Workers Union members, was “well planned, disciplined and effective.” Christine Clarke was there, as Paul Corliss said, because “she abhorred the devastation that redundancies and subsequent poverty brought on families” and “was a fighter for the underdog.” On 31 December, a port customer, Derek Powell, accelerated his 4-wheel-drive vehicle and ran Christine over. Her death was a tragic symbol of the brutal realities of the new industrial landscape.





RMTU picket Wellington Port, John Murfitt (centre) and rail reps in attendance

◀ The Modern Waterfront

The RMTU has demonstrated its resilience over the decades since port reform and the ECA. The ECA was replaced in 2002 by the Labour–Alliance Government’s Employment Relations Act which reintroduced an official role for unions.

But the RMTU faced challenges in both the ports and in New Zealand’s troubled rail industry. Between 1995 and 2000, 11 rail workers were killed on the job, prompting a Ministerial Inquiry in 2000 that vindicated the RMTU’s long-held concerns about safety being sacrificed for profit. This led to the repurchase of the rail infrastructure in 2004 and the operating business in 2008, creating KiwiRail.

The port industry is still affected by the direct legacy of the 1980s and 1990s reforms. Health and safety,

casualization and contracting out continue to be major pressure points. Debates about port ownership persist, with some ports owned outright by local government and others a mix of local government and private shareholders.

In ports like Lyttelton, there is “good political support” for retaining public ownership, with Council candidates pledging to oppose privatization and both port unions campaigning against any sale.

Eddie Dickson says that the government’s original aim to reduce the number of ports and rationalize investment was an abject failure. Instead, the reforms created intense competition where “they all end up fighting each other... then of course attacking both the waterfront workers

and the harbour workers to reduce the cost and reduce the numbers.”

Ross Wilson agrees, stating the reforms led to “huge wasted investment” as local port politics overrode the national interest. This constant, corrosive pressure contributes to ongoing concerns about health and safety, worker fatigue, and mental health.

The ideological reforms of the 1980s shattered established structures and unleashed a race to the bottom that continues to affect port workers to this day. While the RMTU has demonstrated resilience, the legacy of fragmentation and intense competition continues to define the port industry, presenting ongoing challenges for workers’ conditions and a coherent national transport policy. 🌐

Riding the Shinkansen

By Allan Addison-Saipe

Lara and I were extremely fortunate to recently take a holiday in Japan, we had a fantastic time in this beautiful country and took the opportunity to travel by train.

I am no foamer by any stretch, but the Shinkansen (bullet train) is an awesome way to get around. We found the best way was to have a Suica card, which is like a Snapper or HOP card only you can use it in heaps more places. So, we booked our travel online and linked it to our card so we could just scan on to the platform at the turnstile.

Our first thought was “wonder what time the train leaves...?”, well no need to worry the Shinkansen leaves every three minutes from Tokyo heading west, which seemed strange because it always seemed to be south to me, but Japan is divided into east and west. So, there is no shortage of choices for trains to choose. So, reserve your seats and head off to the station. Now in New Zealand whenever we build

something we like to put a café in it, in Japan you need a fifteen-floor shopping centre with at minimum a whole floor of restaurants, believe me these are all great restaurants.

Next steps find your platform? The screens showing departures and arrivals only show about six services so really you can only see about eighteen minutes in advance. If you are too early because you had Lewis Hamilton's Japanese cousin for a Taxi driver (yes, a major SPAD in the first few seconds of that Taxi journey). Get some lunch, go shopping, chill out or buy some food to have on your journey from the 7/11. Seriously, the best egg sandwiches ever at the 7/11 and just buy a nice can of Asahi super dry to wash it down on your train journey.

The stations are so big sometimes it is quite a walk to your platform or if you are getting a connecting local service finding the right platform is everything. Top tip: once you're in the underground google maps can't find you.

Catch your Shinkansen, it leaves on time, don't be late. The three hundred k's at top speed, achieving that speed in three minutes and cornering at two hundred and eighty-five k's. But the smoothest ride, the only thing to remind you that you are moving is the scenery whipping past. Don't bother pointing out sights to each other because by the time you look up it's gone.

Tokyo to Kyoto, four hundred and fifty kilometers, two hours and 20 minutes, arrived in Kyoto to the minute. That is something that you really notice every train we caught whether it was fast, slow, old, new, local or national all ran exactly on time. Lack of punctuality is just not done in Japan.

So let's get a bullet train in New Zealand imagine travelling Wellington to Auckland in about three hours by train and let's do it for half the cost of flying and with a fraction of the emissions. That would have Air New Zealand dropping their prices! 🇳🇿







Northland Branch members with departing Branch Secretary Mat Bennie

Northland

The Northland Branch bid farewell to Branch Secretary Mat Bennie, who is leaving KiwiRail to return to his native Australia. Branch Chair Bill Sweeney paid tribute to Mat and will fill the Branch Secretary role until a new Branch Secretary is elected. Mat wore quite a few Union hats including HSAT Chair, Delegate and member of the HSAT Governance group. He'll be sorely missed for his

leadership and determination to lift KiwiRail's health and safety standards, particularly around working at heights. Last year Mat won the Safeguard magazine Health and Safety Rep of the year for stopping an unsafe working at height situation, making sure staff had fall protection and training before work resumed. He was presented with a RMTU certificate of appreciation.

Other news discussed at the Branch meeting included disappointment that KiwiRail missed out on getting 330 TU's from Golden Buy Cement due to KiwiRail not providing any extra locomotives as well as there is a block of line on the Western line which means they can't do the work. KiwiRail will lose \$600,000.00 in revenue. 🌐

Napier

Kia-Ora Comrades. At Napier Port this "off-season" has seen a lot going on in the infrastructure space to allow for the Terminal

Transformation project to advance. Some of the projects include new substations and workshop upgrades to support electrification, widening of roadways which, in turn, has

meant moving reefer towers and light towers, and investment in new mooring technology for 6 Wharf.

In particular, there are big hopes being pinned on these mooring



systems as their capability to hold vessels in Napier's unique swell conditions will drive the decision around planned crane upgrades (Mobile vs STS).

We've also seen a big push on training (to the point where we have worked a vessel with a trainee alongside signed off staff in 4 out of 5 container handlers). At the same time there has been concentrated efforts toward equipment maintenance to ensure we are well prepared for the upcoming Hawkes Bay apple and


squash season. The members have, as they always do, taken it all in their stride.

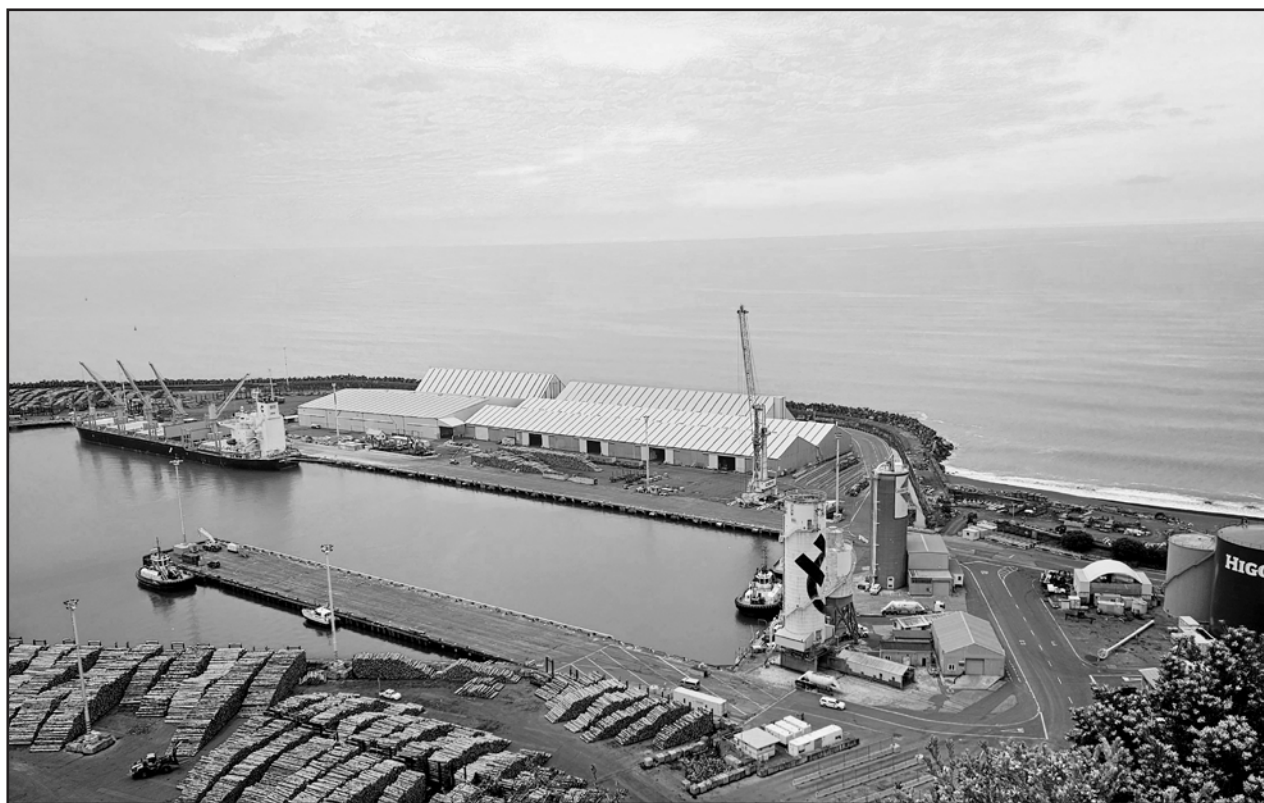
We've been doing truck trials most Monday afternoons on the Maersk Northern Star service in preparation for the move to Autonomous truck operations (these trucks can be operated by a Human or fully automated). The first of twelve electric trucks arrive in April 2026 to begin trials. The remainder will then arrive in August with a view to run trials with Human Drivers, transitioning to

fully autonomous by February 2027. Most feedback has been optimistic with most concerns raised relating purely to factors that will be non-existent outside trial scenarios.

As one can imagine, when we start talking "automation", there is a certain level of anxiety among current members around job security. It goes without saying, there will be ongoing discussions around the impact this will have on jobs.

Watch this space!

Stronger Together. 



Napier Port

Hawkes Bay

Greetings from the Bay Napier, Dannevirke Track Teams have been heavily involved with Projects Ballast Replacement Works on the PNGL, with multiple sites totaling 2,912m, involving renewal of

subsoil, formation, ballast and sleepers.

To accomplish these works in a timely and cost effective manner, teams have been put on Panel Lifter course for removal of Track Sets. BOL on weekends to ensure

no interruption to our day-to-day services. LNI Heavy gangs providing their services in welding and destressing of sites which will be completed mid-December.

Ballast Cleaner arrived on the PNGL to help with completing one



Ballast Replacement Works in Hawkes Bay

of the longest sites (750m). Tamper due to start on the 11th Nov to Tamp all the Ballast Replacement Sites in result of removing TSR's.

During the week Track Teams are eliminating or mitigating EM80 faults which currently has run the PNGL and WRAPA. Due to the new detection of faults added to the EM80, this

has occurred new challenges for the Teams.

Being sunny Hawkes Bay, heat season is in full effect and keeping the teams busy. Excursion Passenger Service (Glenbrook) have also been running from Palmerston North to Napier in early November, structures teams have busy doing maintenance

South of Napier and Signals busy doing new installations and code work.

For those working over Block of line over New Years—Think safety, stay safe.

Have a great Christmas and New Years. 🌐

Palmerston North

We are pleased to announce that, following our recent Special Meeting, the following have been elected. It is a privilege to serve in this capacity, and we are committed to representing our members with integrity and dedication.

Newly elected roles are:

- John Keenan—Locomotive Engineer as **Branch Chair**
- Elaine McCrae—Locomotive Engineer as **Branch Secretary**
- Craig Purvis—Locomotive Engineer as **Branch Treasurer**

We extend heartfelt thanks to the outgoing branch officers for their service and contributions. Each has moved on to new opportunities within KiwiRail, and we wish them continued success in their endeavours.

To our incoming team, congratulations. We step into these roles with

◀ a shared purpose and a strong sense of responsibility. Our work has only just begun, and together, we will continue to advocate for our members and strengthen the Palmerston North branch.

There's something deeply rewarding about waking up each day knowing our work keeps New Zealand moving. At KiwiRail, we're not just employees—we're part of a legacy that spans generations. Whether it's freight, passenger services, or infrastructure, our efforts connect communities, support local economies, and contribute to a more sustainable future. That sense of purpose is hard to beat.

But it's not just the job—it's the people. The camaraderie among KiwiRail workers is second to none. We look out for each other, share knowledge, and take pride in what we do. And with the Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) behind us, we know we're never alone. The union gives us a collective voice, protects our rights, and ensures that fairness and safety are always front and centre.

The RMTU isn't just about advocacy—it's about empowerment. Through training, representation, and solidarity, the union helps us grow as professionals and as people. It's satisfying to know that our concerns are heard and our contributions are valued. When we stand together, we're stronger, and that strength shows in the quality of our

work and the resilience of our industry.

Working for KiwiRail also means being part of something bigger than ourselves. We're stewards of a national asset, and the RMTU helps us protect it—not just for today, but for future generations. Whether it's pushing for better conditions, safer practices, or long-term investment, the union ensures that our work has lasting impact.

As team members working on the ground, we need to raise a few concerns that have been affecting both morale and performance. Not complaints, observations from those living the day-to-day realities of the job, and hoping they'll spark meaningful discussion and action.

Yard Optimisation

There are ongoing frustrations around how the yard is set up. It often feels like we're working around inefficiencies rather than with a system designed for us. Small changes could make a big difference in safety, flow, and stress levels.

Shield App Rule Changes

The frequent updates to rules in the Shield app are hard to keep up with. It's not just the volume—it's the lack of clarity around the rule terminology or jargon. The amount of rule changes on a daily basis is overwhelming. We want to do the right thing, but it's tough when the goalposts keep shifting

Just and Fair Culture Policy

There's confusion and concern about how this policy is being interpreted by the company. While the intent is good, it sometimes feels unevenly applied. We'd appreciate more transparency and consistency so that trust in the system can grow.

Fatiguing Rosters

Many feel the strain of rosters that don't allow for proper rest or recovery. Fatigue is creeping in, and it's not just physical—it's mental. The work done by Roster Reps is ongoing, but we need radical changes to the master roster that support long-term wellbeing. Our belief is that a radical change in the way the Master Roster is constructed is needed to actively achieve good work life balanced rosters.

We're raising these points not to criticise, but because we care about the work, the team, and the culture we're building. Our ambition is that this feedback is taken in the spirit it's offered—and that we can work together to find solutions that benefit both the members of the RMTU and KiwiRail

In short, being part of KiwiRail and the RMTU isn't just a job—it's a source of pride. It's about meaningful work, strong relationships, and a shared commitment to progress. And that, to us, is the true satisfaction of being part of the RMTU and KR. 🌐

Nelson

Konichiwa from Nelson Branch

We had hoped that getting to the end of the year we might be able to relax a bit, but it seems that the Unions job is never done

and never a dull moment to be had... unfortunately.

A couple of Transport Workers ago we alluded to the fact that even though bargaining was over and done with for a 2-year deal, and

that we had a roster system in place, with agreed terms of how that was going to work. We still thought that we would be just as busy as ever keeping the Port on track to uphold agreements made.

It never helps when one of the main players leave, which means spending some time to get everyone else around the table and up-to-speed with past agreements being TOS (Terms of Settlement), agreed roster guidelines, and those verbally agreed joint goals/outcomes (which seem to now count for not much). Even to the point of complete misunderstanding and misuse of the CEA and clauses, these being interpreted in completely the wrong way, not as the clause was intended to be used, because that way suits the manager's desired outcome. And when we engage in discussions to clear the misinterpretation up, we are completely ignored. Hopefully over the next month or so, we will be able to work through the process of a

mediation of sorts to get to a positive outcome for our members on at least a fair portion of the problems we are facing.

On a positive vibe, we are very excited to be having CTU Economist Craig Renney joining us for our next STOPWORK in mid-November. After hearing Craig speak at the last Port's Forum, we think that the members will be as enthralled as we were, to hear him speak and provide us with facts that seem to be NOT present when governments are seeking our vote! He is very animated and witty in his delivery of hard facts and that Geordie accent thrown in for good measure is sure a winner!

The Port is slowing up now with the rush of the season over. Work is dwindling quite quickly, hours are

short especially for the casual members, which makes life quite tough for that group, some of whom have been at the Port for a good many years. The group that the Port rely on heavily to fill the gaps, so they don't need to employ so many stevedores on a permanent basis, but casuals are in a group who have few rights in Employment Law or indeed at the Port where they work. The permanent workers of course get their contracted hours and any unworked hours in idle time payouts. This will be increasing now, although the Stevedore Department is trying to utilise its Stevedores around the Port in other areas to help them out when they are busy and reduce idle time hours. 🌐

Lyttleton

The Lyttelton Port Branch met in November.

Branch Secretary Run down

LCT Change Proposal

LPC continues to be determined to implement the proposal, despite the lack of operational input (management or workers). Most of you will have seen the press coming out regarding the repercussions of the management decisions so far, this is not industrial action, though there have been discreet LPC insinuations.

Travel Time to union meetings—the ERA hearing 31st March 2026, Our Witnesses will be Kelly, Steve Gray, Graeme Norris myself.

Change of Drug and Alcohol policy—Key points

- Oral testing for randoms, urine testing for all other circumstances. Urine collection will continue to

be monitored, through observation from behind.

- Zero tolerance for illegal substances including THC.

Annual leave balances

Letters from LPC advising members they are able to cash out one week of Annual leave without LPC applying financial hardship discretion decision making. Also, in new year will be drive from LPC to reduce AL on books so will be seeking plans from members on using their AL

Employee Participation Agreement

The employee participation is signed by LPC, and the Unions is ten years old now so needs updating. LPC wants to move towards a "charter". From the RMTU 's perspective the document needs to be an "agreement" between the parties so cannot be changed without mutual agreement.

The document sets out the commitment to elected and trained health and safety reps and the functions of the H&S committees. RMTU continue to hold LPC to the principles in the EPA within the H & S committees, this is becoming increasingly difficult.

CEA bargaining so far

CSU Brand new CEA ratified 1 Oct for one year, Inland Port CEA ratified also 1 Oct, for two years. Next is Logistic Officers CEA 17 Jan, Then Main CEA 12 March.

We have approached so far bargaining in a rates and dates way, looking to reduce LPCs ability to remove conditions, however this depends on both parties accepting the approach, it may also work for the LOs CEA too, however we have an inkling LPC want significant change to the Main CEA.

As of at the moment there is no agreement with MUNZ on negotiating





Branch President Kelly Smith presenting Anthony with his certificate and pressie card from the Branch.

◀ together for the main CEA or any indication LPC will seek this.

Members acknowledged Anthony People's who's clocked up 21 years in the civil maintenance department

working as a carpenter and member of the union. 🇬🇧

Canterbury Rail Branch

We are seeing here in Canterbury rail a different approach to investigations, and the way incidents are handled by management, which is unsettling to our members. Where after the incident a member could be stood down for months on full pay, which could

greatly impact on anybody's mental health. Not knowing what is happening, what the management approach will be, or whether you will have a job after months of so-called investigation is not good for any worker.

Then management approach to just and fair culture is to drop straight down to at risk choice without the

checks and balances of did they themselves contribute to the incident, did they do everything correct before, and after the incident has happened. Running our depots short on staff to save budgets means we the members feel pressured to work fast, and do overtime, to complete

work that would otherwise have been completed normally in the 40 hours.

The message is here; If we the members start to feel the pressure, remember one wrong step could mean your whole career in Kiwirail. So step back try to take the red card approach to that work pressure, and say no we will do this in the best and safest way possible. If it takes longer so be it.

Don't let management bang on about safety, and then not provide you with the work colleagues to do the work in a fair and reasonable time. And yes we are all seeing the impact of a shrinking lid approach where workers are not replaced in a timely manner because it saves on budget.

I was told that some of our senior managers can spend up 5 million

dollars of Kiwirail money but can't replace a worker without it going through 10 approvals at every level of Kiwirail.

Seems a silly approach when they are supposed to have your safety in their hands. 🌐

West Coast Rail

West Coast Rail Branch Notes

Greetings from what was a sodden and stormy Spring on the West Coast. Slips, downed trees and signal failure have been the go this spring causing many outages, delays and train cancellations. The signalling upgrade at Moana was bang in the middle of it with multiple suspended signal areas but fortunately there were no rail incidents during this period.

New bridges have been completed and now the cranes have headed north of the Buller Gorge to make a start on a couple more which is great to see.

In operations we have seen the retirement of shunter and union stalwart Ian "not my job" Coates. This

was his second time round after taking redundancy as an LE. You always knew exactly where you stood with Ian, particularly when it came to night shift or knock off time!

The asbestos remediation works should by the time this goes to print be completed in Greymouth, and in Westport a new operations building has been established just down the road from the old station building known as the rabbit Warren.

In other happenings the Transformation team have been eyeing up Otira operations and how it is crewed up the tunnel and maintained. Safety is the top priority here, and worth noting that the way it is run currently is exactly how KR wanted it done, and all everyone in this depot has done is what KR

wanted. Discussions may be starting now however any change prior to the total DM Locomotive roll out would be premature.

By the time this is in print we should have some clarity about the state of play regarding the life extension to Stockton Mine. This is the sole customer for the rail line North of Reefton and we are eager for it to keep on keeping on. Spring Creek coal mine is also back on the table, interestingly the plan is to use the coal to make all manner of high carbon products, like solar panels and other parts of green tech. We would of course welcome this, though it may also be time to take stock of our aging fleet of coal wagons.

Stay safe out there and if in doubt, don't do it. 🌐

Dunedin

Kia Ora from Ōtepoti Dunedin,

I hope you all are keeping safe out there with all that Mother Nature has been throwing at us over the last few months. The Main South Line has had a few disruptions with weather events closing

lines north and south of Dunedin, but with the extra hard work of all the members we were able to keep things moving.

Team Global express despite a bit of weather damage about a week ago, they look to be heading into a reasonably busy peak season.

Dunedin Operations are feeling the peak season already, a bit more tonnage running and whispers of more to come. We are still short staffed and it doesn't look like we will be out of the hole anytime soon. With the change from 8 to 10 hour shifts amongst the Rail Operators, ▶



West Coast Rail Branch: Retiring Delegate and Rail Operator Ian Coates

Remote Control Operators, and Team Leaders things aren't as rosy as what management hoped they would be. Covering shifts is an absolute nightmare, our members are getting burnt out due to the workload of cramming 12 hours worth of work into 10. The Locomotive Engineers, as well as our customers are being affected. LE's are covering jobs on our roster, which leaves less coverage on their roster. Our Operations delegates meet with management this month to discuss the concerns the members have

around the new roster, the same concerns that we raised before even changing to 10 hour shifts. The proof is in the pudding.

Dunedin Railways are full steam ahead with the Cruise Ship season kicking off last month. Just a timely reminder to keep your eyes peeled for all those tourists that are intrigued by the beauty of Aotearoa and may not be looking where they walk as they try and get that magic shot for memories of when they visited this amazing country.

And also a timely reminder for us all, as we will be thinking of upcoming events for summer, visiting with whanau, camping and Christmas and New Year plans. We don't call it the silly season for nothing. Look after each other and your whanau this holiday season. And best wishes for a safe and happy New Year.

He waka eke noa "we are all in this canoe together". 🌐



WOMEN IN MALE DOMINATED OCCUPATIONS & INDUSTRIES

WIMDOI provides women working in male-dominated occupations and industries with a safe environment to share their stories, enhance skills, build networks and strategies and develop Union power, and are bringing their 2026 biennial conference to Aotearoa!

WIMDOI Biennial Conference 2026 11–14th May 2026

If you are a woman working in a male-dominated occupation or industry, talk to your union to express your interest in attending, or get in touch:

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